



consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
Office of Consumer Affairs
Virginia H. Knauer, Director

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Volunteers check poison packaging

Consumer volunteers across the country have begun checking supermarkets, drug stores, hardware stores & other retail outlets for compliance with mandatory poison prevention packaging regulations for aspirin & certain kinds of liquid furniture polish. Volunteers are part of **Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Consumer Deputy Program**.

Aspirin is the item most frequently swallowed by children under 5 years old. It has been a leading cause of deaths & hospitalizations of children. Since April 14, 1972, products containing aspirin—with the exceptions of effervescent tablets containing less than 10% aspirin & unflavored powdered aspirin in unit doses—are required by law to be packaged with child-resistant closures. Non-complying products packaged prior to the effective date may still be available.

Clear liquid furniture polishes—containing 10% or more of mineral seal oil & petroleum distillates or both—must be sold in special protective packaging with a warning label "Danger—Harmful or Fatal If Swallowed." Getting even 1 teaspoonful of such polish into the lungs can be fatal.

Poison Prevention Packaging Act of 1970 also requires child-resistant packaging for other products, including sedatives, barbiturates, amphetamines, certain kinds of windshield wiper antifreeze, liniments, paste & aerosol oven cleaners, caustic drain openers, liquid kindling, lighting fluids (including charcoal lighter fluids).

(The law permits manufacturer to make an easy to open container for the convenience of the elderly & the handicapped, but it must be labeled "This package for households without young children.")

Although the Consumer Deputy Program will focus on aspirin preparations & furniture polishes, CPSC inspectors continually survey retail outlets for compliance with all the poison prevention packaging regulations. As of tomorrow, most prescription drugs will be added to the list of products requiring child-resistant closures.

Consumer Deputies are not employees of CPSC. They attend a training session given by CPSC & receive a letter of introduction. When volunteers visit a store, they request permission to survey the stock. If they find a noncomplying product, they suggest that the store manager check his supplier to find out whether the product should have child-resistant closures.

For additional information about protecting children from accidental poisonings, call Consumer Product Safety Commission toll-free 800-638-2666 (Maryland residents call 800-492-2937).

Teach your children about poison prevention

Parents can help to prevent accidental poisonings in their own homes by presenting children with a colorful comic book, "Dennis the Menace Takes a Poke at Poison." The comic book, originally produced jointly by **Food & Drug Administration (FDA) & Public Health Service (PHS)**, is currently being distributed free by **Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)**. For a copy, write to CPSC, Bureau of Information & Education, Washington, DC 20207.

In the book, popular cartoon character Dennis the Menace shows youngsters how easily children may get hurt in homes where medicines & toxic household substances are not properly safeguarded. The book is also useful for parents themselves, to illustrate the kinds of precautions that must be taken to protect children from accidental poisonings.

Now that the embargo is lifted . . .

Although the Arab oil embargo has been lifted, energy still remains a major consumer problem. The **Federal Energy Office (FEO)** continues to have responsibility for new national energy policies & programs that will develop solutions to both present & long-range energy shortages & coordinate the Administration's Project Independence program calling for energy self-sufficiency by 1980. FEO's responsibilities include:

- responding to consumers' interests;
- administration of an energy allocation program;
- development of energy conservation measures;
- collection of information on energy supplies;
- development of blueprint for Project Independence.

Energy allocation

Even with the lifting of the embargo, FEO officials caution that it will be some time before imports return to normal. Too, one never knows when a new embargo might be imposed. For the present time, then, FEO will continue to administer its mandatory energy allocation program to insure equitable distribution of available petroleum products.

Energy conservation this summer

As important as the energy allocation program is, FEO faces an even more urgent job: to remind consumers of the need to reduce demands for energy. It is essential to continue conserving energy & to increase energy efficiency.

In its April forecast of petroleum supply & demand, FEO predicted that once Arab oil reaches the country, there may be a small surplus of energy supplies in some areas for the remainder of 1974—but only if energy conservation continues.

For the summer, FEO is urging these conservation measures:

In your home—

- try to get along without air conditioning, if you possibly can. There are areas where cool breezes do eliminate the need for air conditioning.
- set thermostat at 78 degrees if you must use your air conditioning. Try to keep thermostat at that temperature.
- run air conditioning equipment only on really hot days. Open windows for fresh air cooling instead of using the unit's fan.
- draw draperies & shades in sunny windows to reduce heat.
- close off unoccupied rooms & turn off air conditioning.

On the road—

- continue to observe the 55 m.p.h. speed limit (it is still the legal limit).
- try using the car air conditioner less than last summer.
- avoid unnecessary car trips.
- plan your errands & other shopping so you do them all in one trip. If possible, carpool with neighbors for errands.

These energy-saving moves should assure us of adequate short-range supplies & should also take us one step closer to the President's long-range goal of Project Independence.

Collection of information

These energy-saving moves should assure us of adequate short-range supplies & should also assure, FEO is taking steps to resolve another energy problem: lack of complete information about our fuel supplies. To find out how much oil we have, FEO has ordered all 250 U.S. refiners to report figures on imports, production & inventories directly to the agency. FEO is also sending out agents to spot-audit refiners & verify figures. The penalty for any refiner who falsely reports information on inventories & supplies is up to \$2,500 for civil and \$5,000 for criminal violations.

... energy for summer & beyond

Consumer representation

The actions described above & many others taken by FEO directly affect consumers. For this reason, two new offices have been set up within the agency to deal with consumers' problems & to represent consumers in FEO policy making. These offices are:

- the Special Impact Office, designed to review & act upon the problems of such groups as the elderly, the handicapped & migrants;
- the Office of Consumer Affairs, established to represent consumer interests in policy meetings of FEO & to recommend programs & actions to help consumers with energy problems.

In addition to these special offices, FEO's 10 regional offices will provide information to consumers & will help resolve consumer energy problems. Cities & telephone numbers for the offices are:

Atlanta 404-876-2492 ext. 942	Chicago 312-353-8412	Denver 303-234-2420	New York 212-264-1021 ext. 3206	San Francisco 415-556-7216 ext. 250
Boston 617-223-5215 ext. 607	Dallas 214-749-7345 ext. 1725	Kansas City 816-374-2011 ext. 209A	Philadelphia 215-597-3890	Seattle 206-442-7280

Federal Energy Administration

The FEO programs designed to deal with our immediate energy problems will become the responsibility of the **Federal Energy Administration (FEA)** upon Congressional approval. In addition to the present FEO functions, another major function of the FEA would be to increase energy supplies & to coordinate Project Independence. To accomplish these goals, the new agency would be given the responsibility to identify & overcome problems regarding: construction of refineries, power plants, etc.; transportation of energy products; conversion of energy sources to more convenient forms; initiation of efforts which will allow energy self-sufficiency by 1980.

Also with Congressional approval, research & development programs to generate new technologies would be the responsibility of **Energy Research & Development Administration (ERDA)**. This agency would bring all major research programs under one structure. At present, energy-related research is being conducted by **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)**, **Interior Dept.**, **National Science Foundation (NSF)** & **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**.

Briefly:

Air travel **Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB)** has a new & simpler format for its monthly *Scheduled Arrival Performance Reports*. Although designed primarily for the aviation industry, the reports show consumers which airlines do the best job of being on time. To receive the free reports, write to Publications Services Section, CAB, Washington, DC 20428.

Softballs Under a consent judgment accepted by **Justice Dept.**, American Softball Association of America (ASAA) has agreed not to give preference to softballs produced by any particular manufacturer. Justice had charged in an antitrust suit that ASAA conspired with 2 sporting goods manufacturers to promote only the Dudley & Harwood brands of softballs during regular season & tournament play. The alleged conspiracy meant many softball teams could not use other balls of similar quality but lower price.

Warning!

• **TACO SAUCE—Food & Drug Administration (FDA)** reports Rosarita Mexican Foods, Inc., Mesa, AZ, is recalling Rosarita Taco Sauce in 7 ounce bottles because of the danger of the bottles exploding. If you have this sauce, wrap it in paper or other protective covering & throw it away.

Rotary engine cars: not best performers

A new series of tests made by **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** indicates that cars with rotary (Wankel) engines offer relatively low fuel economy when compared with conventional piston engine cars in the same weight class.

The rotary engine car tested was the Japanese-produced Mazda, only car of this type sold in the U.S. Both the manufacturer and the U.S. importer of Mazda cooperated with EPA in the testing program, as did manufacturers of other cars with which Mazda was being compared—Saab, Vega & Torino. This special series of tests was initiated by EPA after Mazda came up with figures suggesting that the rotary engine actually achieved considerably better fuel economy than showed in previous EPA tests. That contention was not proved by the gasoline mileage results of these newest tests:

Mazda RX-2 (2,750 lbs.)
13.4 mpg—city driving
21.2 mpg—highway driving

Mazda RX-4 (3,000 lbs.)
12.5 mpg—city driving
20.5 mpg—highway driving

Mazda RX-3 (2,750 lbs.)
13.3 mpg—city driving
19 mpg—highway driving

Vega (automatic) (3,000 lbs.)
18.7 mpg—city driving
27.7 mpg—highway driving

Torino (4,500 lbs.)
12.5 mpg—city driving
20 mpg—highway driving

Saab (2,750 lbs.)
21 mpg—city driving
30.6 mpg—highway driving

Vega (manual) (3,000 lbs.)
17.5 mpg—city driving
30.7 mpg—highway driving

Cars in the test were supplied by the manufacturers & were all newly tuned. Vega & Saab were selected as samples of conventional cars for this test because they are in the same weight classes as the Mazdas tested. Torino, though much heavier, was selected because it had achieved the same fuel economy as the Mazda in EPA's previous test.

There are, however, other cars that meet these criteria of weight & fuel economy & that could have been used for the tests. Consumers who are shopping for a car, & are using gasoline mileage as a main criterion, should refer to fuel economy reports for all available cars covered in previous EPA tests [CONSUMER NEWS: Dec. 1, 1973; Oct. 1, 1973; May 15, 1973].

Each car was tested under laboratory conditions, after being driven onto a dynamometer, a machine that can simulate the road conditions of both city & highway driving. Use of the dynamometer assures that every car will be subjected to precisely the same driving conditions.

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